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CLARK, G

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With the author's respect Compl: to Lady Emily Hardinge.

A
S E R M O N
ON
The Death
OF
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE DUKE OF YORK,
COMMANDER IN CHIEF,
&c. &c. &c.
FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT
OF THE
ROYAL MILITARY ASYLUM, CHELSEA,
PREACHED
IN THE CHAPEL OF THAT INSTITUTION, JANUARY 7, 1827.

BY THE REV. GEO. CLARK,
CHAPLAIN TO THE ROYAL MILITARY ASYLUM, AND TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY MILNE AND DUCKWORTH,
76, FLEET STREET.
1827.



PRINTED BY ORDER
OF
HIS GRACE
THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF,
AND THE
HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS
OF THE
Royal Military Asylum ;
AND BY THEM DIRECTED,
THAT A COPY BE GIVEN TO EACH CHILD IN THE
ASYLUM
AT THE PERIOD OF
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S DEATH,
WHENEVER SUCH CHILD SHALL LEAVE
THE INSTITUTION.

*Extract from the Minutes of a Committee of
Commissioners, held at the Royal Military
Asylum, Feb. 12, 1827.*

“ The Committee, referring to the Sermon delivered on
“ January 7th, by the Chaplain of the Military Asylum, the
“ Rev. Mr. CLARK, request that he will cause the same to be
“ printed; and the Committee direct, that a Copy of it shall
“ be delivered to every Individual at this time belonging to
“ the Asylum. The Copies intended for the Children are to be
“ immediately bound in strong leather, the Name of each
“ child being engraven on the Cover, and they are to be
“ delivered to them, with their Bible and Prayer-Book, on their
“ leaving the Institution.

“ It is hoped this will be the means of perpetuating on their
“ minds the recollection of their late Friend and Benefactor,
“ the Founder of the Royal Military Asylum.”

A SERMON, &c.

II KINGS, ii. 3.

“ KNOWEST THOU THAT THE LORD WILL TAKE AWAY THY
MASTER FROM THY HEAD TO-DAY ?”

WHEN the Almighty would take Elijah up to Heaven by a whirlwind, these words revealed to Elisha, his servant and successor, the loss which he and his country were about to sustain.

We, brethren, may adopt them to-day, in reference to the sad event which has filled so many eyes with tears, and hearts with sorrow: we can say with peculiar—alas! with too peculiar propriety—“ The Lord has taken away our ‘ Master’ from our head to-day.” All England, and all the possessions of England, will mourn because of him; but *we* have nearer and more private cause of grief. Was he not the founder

of this Asylum? Did not his influence with the rulers of our country, raise these protecting walls around the children of those brave men whom he had led in the field, and over whose interests he watched with a father's care? Did he not give much of his valuable time and personal attendance to rear and foster this child of his benevolence? Have we not seen, with our own eyes, the interest he felt in the welfare of this Institution? A few months only have elapsed since we beheld him in the midst of us, inspecting our order, examining into our care of the little ones around us, and giving another proof of that energy, activity, and zeal, which, for many years, have communicated their beneficial influence to all around him?

It is not my intention, brethren, to preach the funeral sermon of this Noble Duke, or, even were I able, to pronounce his panegyric; but this is his own Institution, familiarly and justly called by his name. He is—alas! we must say, he was—the head of our house, and therefore we cannot hear of that head being taken away, without expressing our grief.

This great Prince must not pass to his grave, without our indulging, a few moments, in those testimonies of affection he so well deserved at our hands. The seats of our Chapel must not wear the emblems of mourning and attachment, whilst those who occupy them are silent upon so interesting a subject. Our tribute, indeed, will be but small, yet it will be sincere. The magnificent monument, and “the storied urn,” may tell posterity of a nation’s gratitude; ours must be the more humble and transitory offering of the lips and of the heart.

I believe I shall be in perfect unison with the feelings of every individual of this Institution, and of every occasional visitor, here to-day, if I make the event we all so much deplore, the subject of my present discourse.

Let us beg that the grace of God may be with us, and direct us.

Let us remember, that though the good qualities of men may be spoken of in the house of God, yet the Lord alone is to be exalted there;

whatever crowns we may have, or our erring brethren think we have, they must all be cast down at his feet, before whom we kneel and acknowledge ourselves miserable sinners.

Let us pray that private feelings may not carry us too far; that both speaker and hearer may bear in mind, that every remarkable event of Providence, is an especial call to look inwards; that when death smites the towering cedar and lofty palm, the lowly shrubs of the valley should take warning and be ready.

1st. We will endeavour to speak of our lamented “Master” and head, with reference to his high public office, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of Britain, under the authority of his Sovereign and Brother.

2ndly. With reference to our own Institution, which was planted, has sprung up, and we trust, borne some fruit, under his powerful auspices and protection.

And 3rdly, Address ourselves more particularly

to the young persons around us, on the severe loss they have sustained.

1st. We will endeavour to speak of our lamented President, with a reference to his high official capacity.

During a period of thirty years, he filled the elevated and important station of Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of England—a station, at all times of the greatest consequence, but unspeakably so, when he was called to discharge its duties. A great and mighty nation, the almost natural enemies of our country, had, on a sudden, transformed themselves, as it were, into a vast camp of soldiers: they overran Europe with innumerable armies, led on by the most skilful Generals, and aimed at universal dominion. Woe to the nations which could not resist them in the field; they were quickly compelled to become their servants; their choicest youth recruited their armies, and their most precious treasures filled their coffers.

A gracious God exempted our own land from

the common lot. He raised up able men, who steered the vessel of the State through conflicting waves covered with the wrecks of other kingdoms : he breathed a spirit of valour and enterprize into the hearts of our sailors, which swept the fleets of our enemies from the ocean. Yet even this would not have preserved us, if his goodness had not equally blessed the other arm of our strength and power.

How often have men of all parties, classes, and opinions, united to ascribe the effective state of that arm, under Providence, to the zeal and vigour of the head that governed it. In those fields of trial which crowned our country with victory, and broke the power of our enemies—the valour of the British soldier did much ; the skill of their leaders did much ; but they who then won the proudest laurels, were free to allow that they principally owed their success to the high state of discipline, order, and regularity, which had been introduced into the Army by its Royal Chief.

It is not too much to say that he new-modelled

the important department committed to his care—redressed many evils which had crept into its administration—threw open the door of promotion to rising merit—founded Institutions to give skill and military science to its Officers—commanded the adoption of Regimental Schools for the instruction of the private soldier and his children—in a word, imparted to every branch of the British Army, an efficiency it never before possessed, the beneficial results of which will long continue, when nothing remains of their illustrious Author, but the fair fame he has so justly acquired. This lamented Prince well deserved the name so often given to him, “the Soldiers’ Friend.” He knew their worth, had shared their dangers, and been an eye-witness of their courage in action, patience under hardships, attachment to their country, and fidelity to its cause. These virtues had made a deep impression on his heart in his youth, and it was a chief object of his riper years to improve the discipline, morality, comfort, and the social and domestic happiness, of this valuable class of our brethren.

It pleased Providence to bless his benevolent efforts in an eminent degree ; those for whom he laboured, were not insensible of his kindness and exertions. The whole Army implicitly confided in his justice and impartiality ; every individual was thoroughly convinced of his good-will towards him ; both officer and private equally felt that their great Commander exercised his power solely to promote the noble purposes for which it was given : nay, we may go farther, and say, that to this feeling it is probable the whole empire itself contains not one dissentient voice. Sincere, indeed, will be the soldier's sorrow ; whether he garrison the Islands of the distant ocean, unfurl his banners to the burning sun of India, or to the freezing blasts of the North, the same sentiment will pervade every bosom ; each, when he hears of the death of his noble Commander, will feel that he has lost a friend.

On this firm foundation, then, the illustrious Prince may rest his fame ; from the lofty eminence of thirty years' faithful administration of his high office, he may justly challenge to his memory,

what will be as freely given, “ the Soldier’s love and his Country’s gratitude.”

2ndly. It may be permitted us to speak of our departed “Master” and head, with a reference to the Institution in which we dwell.

However inadequately we may have described his merits, as commanding the Armies of his country, yet here we may hope to be more successful.

It will be pleasant to us to refresh our gratitude to him, under whose authority we have been placed in this Asylum, and where we enjoy so many comforts. It will afford us a melancholy satisfaction, to tell the children around us, of the warm interest he took in their welfare, and, as far as we are able, to impress their youthful hearts with affection and esteem for his memory.

To what does our Institution owe its origin? To the humanity of him, who, when alive, bore the title of Duke of York. He had long observed the helpless state of many of the children of those

brave men who fight the battles of their country. He knew how often these little ones were, of necessity, exposed to want, disease, and distress; that their parents, when alive, could scarcely support them, but when, by the fatigues and dangers of war, they became orphans and fatherless, their state was truly wretched.

This benevolent Prince pleaded their cause with the Rulers of his country, and with what success, this magnificent Institution abundantly testifies.

The merciful design was formed in his own compassionate heart—his royal hand laid the first stone of the edifice, and his frequent visits urged on the work till it was fit to receive its youthful inmates. We, who are old enough to remember this, now long since past, have pleasure in relating to you, who are younger sojourners, the warm and active interest our deceased Benefactor manifested in the rise and progress of this Asylum. Day by day, at least week by week, did we behold him visit the rising Institution, anxiously survey its advancement, form

laws for its government, and suggest modes of increasing the comforts of its inhabitants, fast pouring in from the four quarters of the globe. In every thing which could promote our welfare and happiness did he set an example, which has been well followed by those who had the honour of labouring with him in the important work.

When the completion of the Establishment rendered his frequent inspection no longer necessary, he still retained a lively interest in its prosperity, and watched over it with paternal care.

He knew the blessings, comforts, and advantages it would bring to the children of the soldier; he foresaw its grateful and salutary effect upon the soldier himself: that it would increase his attachment to his country—bind him, if possible, more firmly to its cause—relieve his mind from anxiety concerning his family; that he would go into the field, not with a braver, but with a lighter heart, when he reflected that the shot which made his child an orphan, would commend that child more powerfully to the pro-

tection of his noble Chief. To the last moment of his valuable life, our deceased Master and head manifested his attachment to our Institution, and to the benevolent and valuable purposes for which it was founded.

In the personal character of this illustrious Duke, there were many amiable and princely virtues to excite our admiration and praise.

He was of a commanding exterior, noble person, handsome countenance, and gracious carriage.

His mind was of a very manly cast; his disposition frank, open, and ingenuous; he abhorred deceit, and every thing which bore the semblance of cunning and insincerity. His popularity, universal as it was, arose entirely from his actions: he perfectly disdained to court applause by any low and unworthy devices. It is said that, in his high office, he never willingly excited an expectation he did not intend to gratify, nor gave a promise which he ever violated. He was a faithful friend, and a generous

enemy ; or rather, generous towards his enemies, for he was himself the enemy of no one. He was a Prince of great personal courage ; indeed, that quality is said to be hereditary in his Royal House. He possessed considerable penetration of character, and a sound judgment in the high affairs of his office ; he patiently heard the opinions of others before he formed his own, but when he had once decided for himself, he was rarely known to change. He was strongly attached to the Protestant Establishment of his country, and openly and firmly resisted every attempt, by which he judged its ascendancy might be affected, or its influence weakened.

His disposition was remarkably kind, amiable, and benevolent towards his fellow-creatures ; indeed, those virtues seemed to increase in proportion to the lowliness of the rank in which the person moved towards whom they were directed. He not only promoted the welfare of those Institutions to which he was naturally allied by his office and profession, but of a multitude of others. He was ever ready to forward their peculiar views and intentions, and had

a manifest delight in alleviating the distresses, and increasing the happiness of his countrymen.

This great Prince was a person very easy of access; though brought up in Courts and ever near the Throne, he was a stranger to pride and haughtiness. His manner and behaviour to those beneath him, even in the remotest degree, was of that open, natural, and courteous description, that none could approach his person without loving him. When addressed by the lowest and poorest individual (and such was not unfrequently the case), he seemed to forget the great worldly distance between them, and to remember only that one fellow-creature should ever be kind and affable to another.

It is not the least part of his praise, that he was a dutiful son, and affectionate brother: a lover of peace and union. Those pests of a court who try to divide friends that should be as one, had no effect either upon his heart or his head. His good offices were ever ready to compose differences, remove misunderstandings, and allay heats and quarrels. Perhaps we may say, in

one word, that his natural disposition was peculiarly characteristic of the country which could boast of him as her son. The proud cemetery where Britain's Princes moulder into dust, contains not a heart more truly English, than that which once throbbed in the bosom of this noble Duke.

His many fine and amiable qualities gained him the love of every member of his illustrious House. Our gracious Sovereign is said to have been more especially attached to him, and probably, no monarch was ever called to lament a more dutiful subject, a more affectionate brother, or a more faithful friend.

In speaking of our late "Master and Head," even in this, which may well be called his own Institution, we must be careful that our feelings do not so much overmaster us as to cause an erroneous impression to be made upon your minds that we have been commending a man, without the common frailties of our nature—a man without sin or blemish. Whilst it must be remembered that perfection is not to be found

amongst the children of men ; whilst it is to be lamented that all and each of those whom we hold most dear, partake of the fallen condition of our nature, in a greater or a less degree, yet we must bear in mind that when once the grave has terminated their mortal career, it is the good alone of which we should wish to speak. The departed Prince is now beyond our sphere of judgment. The benefits of the man are strongly felt, and it is our duty to be grateful for them ; whilst the spirit of him who conferred them upon his country, is gone to a great and awful account, the contemplation of which may cause even the best to tremble. We know, indeed, that no sins are hidden from the scrutinizing eye of our Judge, but we are also assured that the truly penitent may look for mercy and grace, through the merits and mediation of the only perfect man, the only man without sin, our divine Saviour and Redeemer.

There were several circumstances attending the last illness of our beloved President, upon which we may reflect with satisfaction and thankfulness ; and which lead us to hope, that he fled

for refuge to that Friend of fallen man, through whom alone we can look for salvation.

It pleased the Lord, of his great mercy, to give to him much time to prepare for the awful change which was to terminate his illness. He was not taken away suddenly and in a moment. He had a long warning given to secure that “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” “Whom the Lord loveth,” and to whom he would show his everlasting kindness, “he chasteneth.” We have reason to hope that our afflicted Master sincerely acknowledged the hand of God in his visitation. We have heard that he received the information of his danger with perfect calmness and composure. He replied, to the faithful attendant who communicated the awful intelligence, “God’s will be done;” a manly and a christian sentiment. We have read that he partook of the blessed Sacrament of the Supper, that the Heads of our Church, who know how to speak to dying men, and to point out the road of salvation, did often visit him. These are very consoling circumstances, and lead us to hope that his immortal soul has been received by that Saviour,

who casteth out none who truly come unto him.

His illness, which was of a long, and latterly, of a very painful nature, he bore with much patience and resignation. Alas! his royal birth, high rank, and lofty titles, could avail him nothing in the valley of the shadow of death : he must pass through its terrors as other men, and experience all its pains and agonies. In vain the most skilful professors of the healing art exercised their united skill and wisdom ; perhaps, for a while, they might delay the fatal moment, but could do no more. We have a melancholy satisfaction in reflecting that an Officer of this Institution, who has not unfrequently visited our own sick bed, was the most constant attendant upon that of his afflicted Chief. He had long watched over his health in the happier years of strength and enjoyment, and now, in the evil days of sickness and death, he was ever with him : his tender assiduities and skill were often acknowledged by the grateful sufferer ; they did what they could—they smoothed the approach of that moment which awaits us all, and his

faithful arm supported the dying Prince, during many hours, immediately previous to his dissolution.*

Brethren, let us lay these things to heart, and watch and be ready.

I trust I have not said too much of our beloved President, and under our Sovereign our “Master” and our head. Before such a congregation as the present one, in this place of worship, in his own house and institution, we may be allowed to dwell more particularly upon the loss we have sustained, than might be suitable in every place.

It is our duty to observe the awful and afflic-

* P. Macgregor, Esq., Serjeant-Surgeon to the King, Surgeon to the Royal Military Asylum, and to his late Royal Highness: a gentleman, whose professional skill, and high respectability of character, rendered him worthy of that esteem and preference, with which he had been so long honoured by his Royal Patron.

tive events of Providence, and learn from them useful and instructive lessons.

When God takes away the great ones of the earth, especially those more immediately connected with ourselves, he seems to call to us with a louder voice. Let us attend to the admonition. The new year has already taken from us and our Institution, a powerful and steady friend. Let us then endeavour to secure His friendship who can never be taken from us; who is not subject to sin, disease, or death; upon whom time has no influence, and who liveth from eternity to eternity.

Before I conclude, I would more immediately address a few words to the young persons of this Institution upon the severe loss they have sustained, and will beg them to give me their particular attention.

MY DEAR CHILDREN—

I need not tell you, that it has pleased Almighty God to take away from this world, the President of this Institution, the Duke of York. He was

the firm friend of your fathers ; he had led them in the field, shared their dangers, and spent his whole life, talents, and interest, in promoting their comfort and happiness. He was also a kind and steady friend to you, their children : whatever advantages you enjoy in this Asylum, you owe, under Providence, to the Duke of York ; he was the founder of this Institution, and by his recommendation and exertions, it was begun, and completed.

Many of you well remember this good Friend, who is now taken from us. A few months ago you beheld him walk through your ranks ; you saw in his countenance the pleasure he felt, from witnessing the healthy and creditable appearance of so many children of British soldiers. I exhort you to hold his memory in your hearts and affections ; shew your gratitude by improving the advantages he has given to you, in this Asylum, and by doing your duty towards God and man, when you go forth into the world.

Let us, brethren, who are more advanced in years ; show our gratitude, by copying the

example, which this First Prince of the empire has set before us, in the just and faithful administration of his high office.

As he watched over the interests of the fathers of these children, so let us watch over those of the children themselves; let us secure to them, as far as we are able, the full blessings of an Institution, of which this lamented Prince was the founder and protector, and within whose walls his name should never be mentioned, but in terms of gratitude, affection, and respect.

Now to God, &c.

FINIS.

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